

# The LION and the MOUSE

Verseified from

Æsop's Fables

By Miss Clara Doty Bates

A LION on a sultry day,  
Asleep in a shady thicket lay;  
Over him rustled the slender cane,  
While about him, spread upon the turf,  
From neck and shoulders his huge mane  
Rolled and tossed like a yellow surf.

His rusty tawny,  
Limbs lithe and brawny,  
With paws that could creep through jungle grass  
Like a cat on a carpet, yet could bound  
With stride and leap along the ground;  
Could over the heated desert pass,  
Leaving behind a dented wake  
Of tracks like a long continuous snake;  
With tail for lashing,  
With teeth for gnashing,  
And throat that could pour a threatening thunder  
He was indeed, and little the wonder,  
Even while he dozed within his den,  
King of beasts and terror of men.

A small brown MOUSE,  
From her hidden house,  
Her house of grasses — little more  
Than a cellar with a silken floor —  
Crept out to find some tender shoot,  
Some spicy bark, some juicy root,  
Some berry, or nut, or kind of fruit.





She saw the **LION** there asleep;  
And what should she do but crawl and creep  
With tangling feet along his mane —  
Perhaps she thought it a field of grain,  
So waxy and yellow, and growing so close:  
She searched it over, she felt no fear,  
But with keen bright eyes would peep and peep,  
As she crept along to his very nose.

He was dreaming that over a desert close  
He chased a herd of antelope,  
And his heart beat fast with a savage hope  
When the little tickling scratching claws  
Made him nestle and stretch his paws.  
He was slow to rouse  
From his lazy drowse,  
Till again and again the meddling **MOUSE**  
Scrambled and whisked about his face —  
A shake of his head, a fierce grimace,  
And she lost her hold,  
She tumbled and rolled —  
The giant had moved, and there, alas,  
She was under his great foot on the grass!

Instead of questioning him, or speaking,  
As ladies will, she fell to shrieking,  
And he, with anger in his eyes,  
Spoke sternly to her in this wise:  
"Crawling and bothering like a fly,  
You'll have to die — you'll have to die!  
For 'tis never safe, you ought to know,  
To wake a sleeping **LION** so."



"Ah, qui, que-que,  
 Que-que," cried she,  
 "Pray let me go this once—some day,  
 King of the mice, I will repay!"  
 He laughed "Ha-ha!" he laughed "Ho, ho!"  
 A MOUSE repay a LION! Go!"  
 And off to her hidden, dried-grass house  
 Hurried the flustered, trembling MOUSE,  
 And sank on her silk floor gratefully,  
 Sobbing "Que-que, ai, ai, que-que!"  
 On stalwart haunches,  
 Crackling the branches  
 Like straws beneath him, the LION sprang,  
 And out of his hiding,  
 Gauntering, striding,  
 Roared and laughed till the jungle rang.

Down by the river, marshy, wet,  
 Had hunters spread a lion net;  
 But, full of mirth, how could he think  
 Of danger where he was used to drink?  
 One fine long leap to the ready brink,  
 And plunging, falling,  
 The web enthralled  
 With cord and mesh till he could not stir,  
 He lay, his royal beard outspread  
 Like a monarch's mantle, golden-red,  
 On the broken rushes, a prisoner.







Long time, with moaning  
 Heaving and groaning,  
 He strove, till dawn fell chill on him,  
 And knew that with morning  
 And hunters returning  
 Their dogs would rend him limb from limb.  
 Hark, hark!  
 A rustle and stir down in the dark!  
 A piping voice, a gentle squeaking:  
 Not so loud as a cricket creaking,  
 "Lie still, O king of the mice, lie still!  
 If I can set you free, I will."

'Twas the little MOUSE, and down she sat,  
 Nibble at this rope, gnaw at that;  
 Teeth were tiny, but sharp to bite,  
 And she filed and sawed with all her might;  
 Tugged and pulled, and rasped and grated,  
 Cut and scissored and separated!

So hour by hour passed away,  
 Till rosy tints on the twilight gray  
 Told of the coming on of day.  
 And then, at length,  
 By the puny strength  
 The LION had laughed at and derided,  
 His treacherous fetters were divided.





## The Hare and the Tortoise

as Versified upon Esop's fables by  
This was where the HARE lived:

A wide sweet meadow,  
Full of roving honey-bees,  
Cool with clover shadow,

There, through long and sunny days,

Sat he, dozing, sleeping,

But at night beneath the moon

Went forth loping, leaping,

Standing on his hind feet,

Peering up and over,

To see if anybody came

To trampeling down his clover.

That's the way the HARE lived,

Happy and fleet-footed,

Dressed in gray and silver fur,

Capped and gloved and booted

Gave if hound was on his track

That he could outrun him,

Or if hunter with a gun

He could dodge and shun him:

Standing on his hind feet,

Looking shyly over,

One would think his pointed ears

But the leaves of clover.

Paris 23







Along came a TORTOISE,  
Clumsily, slowly,  
Poked his head out, saw the HARE,  
Halted, bowing lowly.  
A horny coat was on his back —  
Poor awkward fellow —  
Of dingy, muddy-looking black  
Streaked a bit with yellow.  
“Ho,” called the HARE to him,  
“Ho, sir, hello, sir!  
When did you leave home, and where  
Do you intend to go, sir?”




Up the TORTOISE raised a claw —  
Salute military —  
“I left home a week ago,  
And am hurried, very,  
Over in the field beyond  
Is a pool of water,  
I’ve a brother living there  
With a son and daughter.”  
Then the HARE flicked his ear,  
Wishing to be cunning:  
“By the way, are not your feet  
A trifle short for running?”





“Rather short, maybe, but still  
I should like to meet you  
In a race — though you were swift  
As the wind, I’d beat you.  
As the dunce in earnest? eh?  
Possibly but joking,  
Though he tittered in a way  
That was quite provokin’.  
On a hillock green a FOX  
Heard the words of banter,  
Sniffed the air for news, and then  
Came up at a canter.”








"FOX shall fix the goal for us,"  
Said the HARE politely,  
"And the distance to be run;  
He can do it rightly."  
So the time was set; the track  
Paced; the TORTOISE said he  
Felt a little tired, of course,  
And lame — but he was ready.  
Off went the lightsome HARE,  
Swift as any rocket,  
With a jaunty, easy air,  
A hand in each pocket.



Scud through the clover bloom,  
Set the bees hurrying,  
Sent all the meadow-mice  
Scampering, scurrying;  
Startled a hobolink,  
Up, up, singing;  
Soft-footed as a ball,  
Bounding and springing;  
While the TORTOISE waddled off,  
One way, then another,  
Each foot more dull and loath  
Seeming than the other.








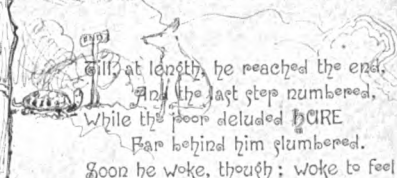
Clampered amongst the roots,  
 Stumbled and faltered,  
 Even his very course  
 Doubled and altered.  
 Slow as any snail he went,  
 Shuffling and drawling  
 Over every hump and hub,  
 Slipping and falling;  
 Far in advance of him,  
 From the thick clover,  
 With an easy glance the HARE  
 Scanned the track over.



Still was the laggard one  
 So far behind him  
 He amongst the sweet trefoil  
 Scarcely could find him;  
 Made a trumpet of his paw,  
 Calling, "Ho, hello, sir;  
 This the way to reach the goal,  
 If you'd like to know, sir!"  
 Then he lay down, thinking thus:  
 "What's the use of keeping  
 Such a pace for such a race?  
 Better to be sleeping!"



"Ois," he said, "but a farce;  
 I can surely win it—  
 After I have had a nap,  
 In just half a minute,  
 Ears lopped back, long and soft,  
 Head drooped and nodded;  
 While his rival toward their aim  
 Calmly, slowly plodded.  
 On, and on, and ever on!  
 The long day was waning;  
 On, and on, and ever on!  
 Gaining, slowly gaining.



Still at length he reached the end,  
 And the last step numbered,  
 While the poor deluded HARE  
 Far behind him slumbered.  
 Soon he woke, though: woke to feel  
 All his boastful folly,  
 And in shame crept out of sight,  
 Very melancholy.  
 There he wept and pondered long:  
 "Fleetness could have done it,  
 But — the other has the prize!  
 Patient work has won it!"



# The DONKEY

AND THE

# LION'S SKIN

Verseified

from **Æsop's Fables**

By Mrs. Clara Deane Bates

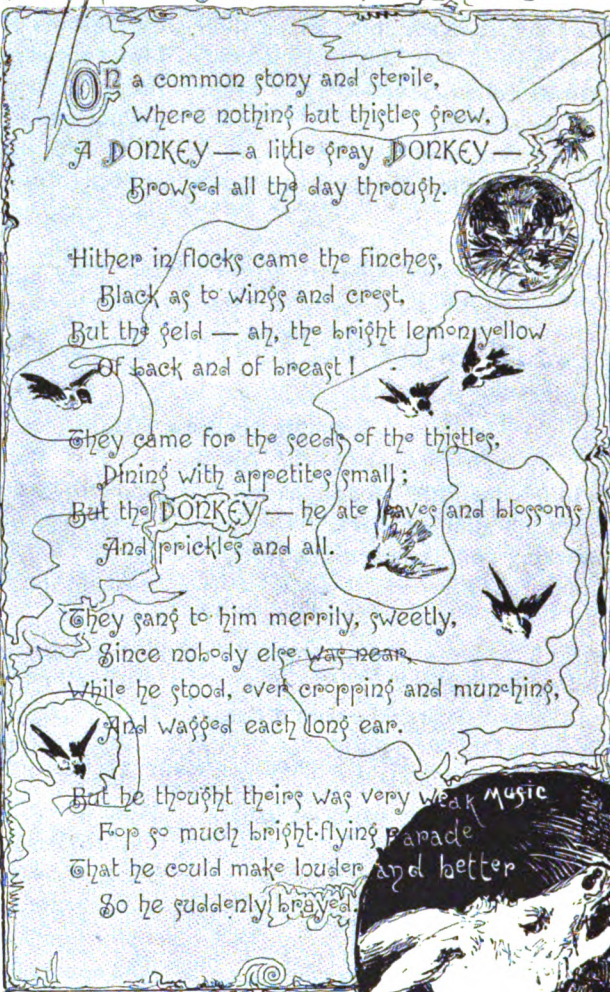
ON a common stony and sterile,  
Where nothing but thistles grew,  
A DONKEY—a little gray DONKEY—  
Browsed all the day through.

Hither in flocks came the finches,  
Black as to wings and crest,  
But the field—ah, the bright lemon yellow  
Of back and of breast!

They came for the seeds of the thistles,  
Dining with appetites small;  
But the DONKEY—he ate leaves and blossoms  
And prickles and all.

They sang to him merrily, sweetly,  
Since nobody else was near,  
While he stood, ever cropping and munching,  
And wagged each long ear.

But he thought theirs was very weak music  
For so much bright-flying parade  
That he could make louder and better  
So he suddenly brayed.





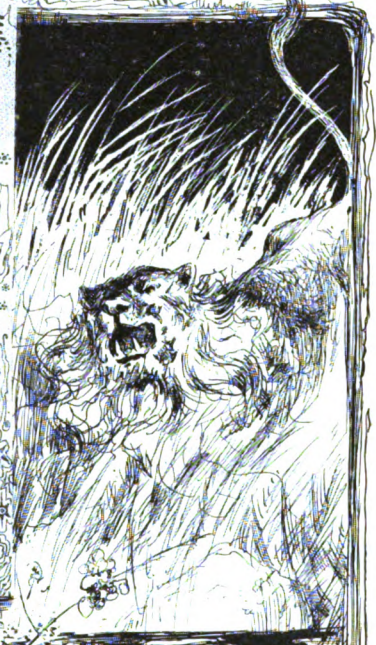
And away flew the terrified fringes,  
Like leaves in a tempest blown,  
And left him, deserted and lonesome,  
On the common alone.

And though he went galloping after  
His utmost speed was in vain;  
But in running he found where a hunter  
A LION had slain.

There the DEER hung to dry, huge, tawny;  
He scanned it with ludicrous dread,  
Till a wonderful new idea  
Came into his head.

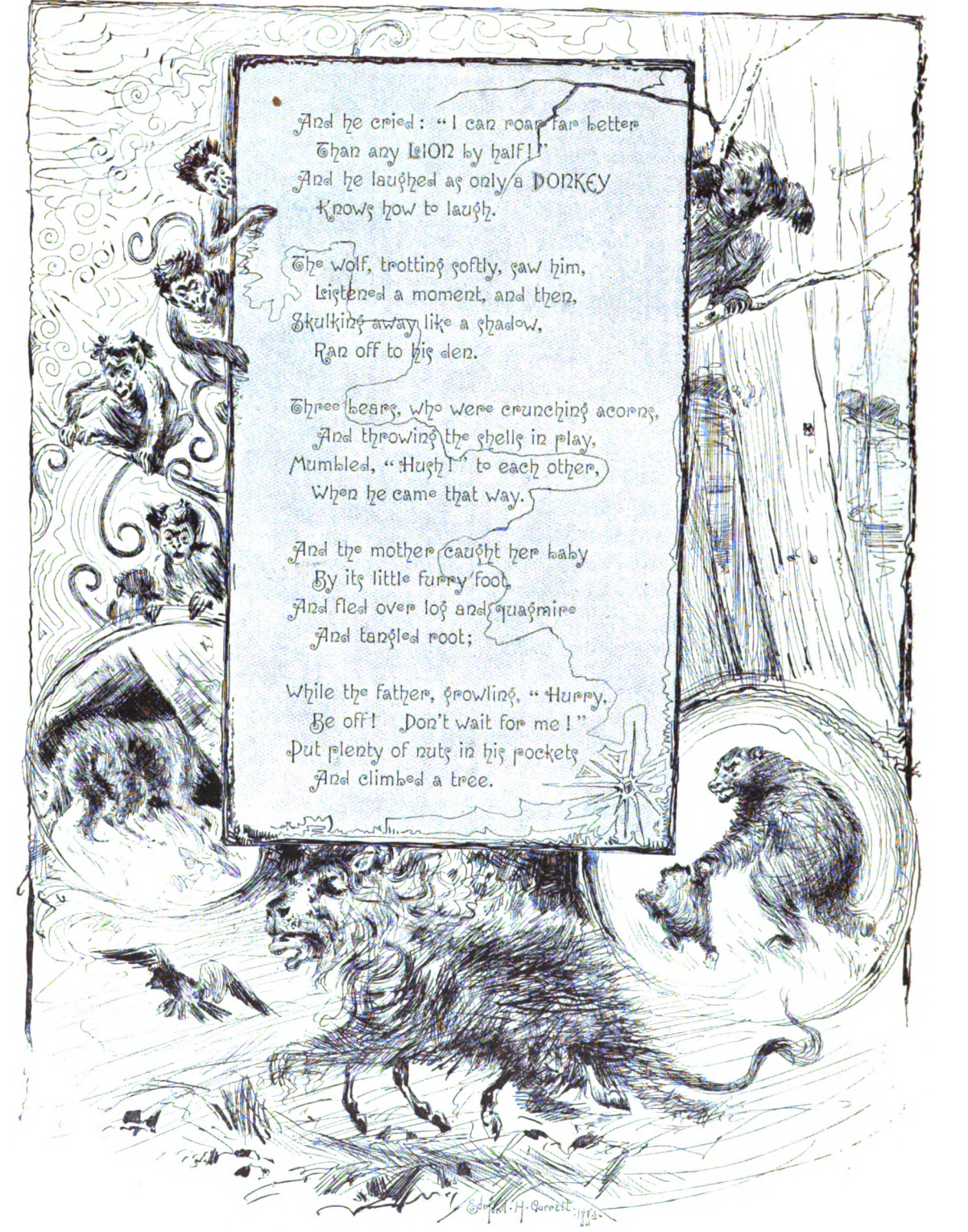
He seized it, heavy and shaggy,  
As much as his strength could hold;  
And flung it over his shoulders,  
Defiant and bold;

And, clothed thus, went prancing and bounding  
Away to the woods to see  
How the bravest beasts of the forest  
Would tremble and flee.



Edmund H. Garrett  
1883





And he cried: "I can roar far better  
Than any LION by half!"  
And he laughed as only a DONKEY  
Knows how to laugh.

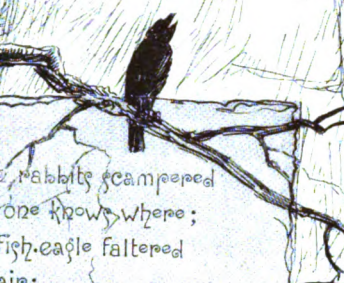
The wolf, trotting softly, saw him,  
Listened a moment, and then,  
Skulking away like a shadow,  
Ran off to his den.

Three bears, who were crunching acorns,  
And throwing the shells in play,  
Mumbled, "Hush!" to each other,  
When he came that way.

And the mother caught her baby  
By its little furry foot,  
And fled over logs and quagmire  
And tangled root;

While the father, growling, "Hurry,  
Be off! Don't wait for me!"  
Put plenty of nuts in his pockets  
And climbed a tree.





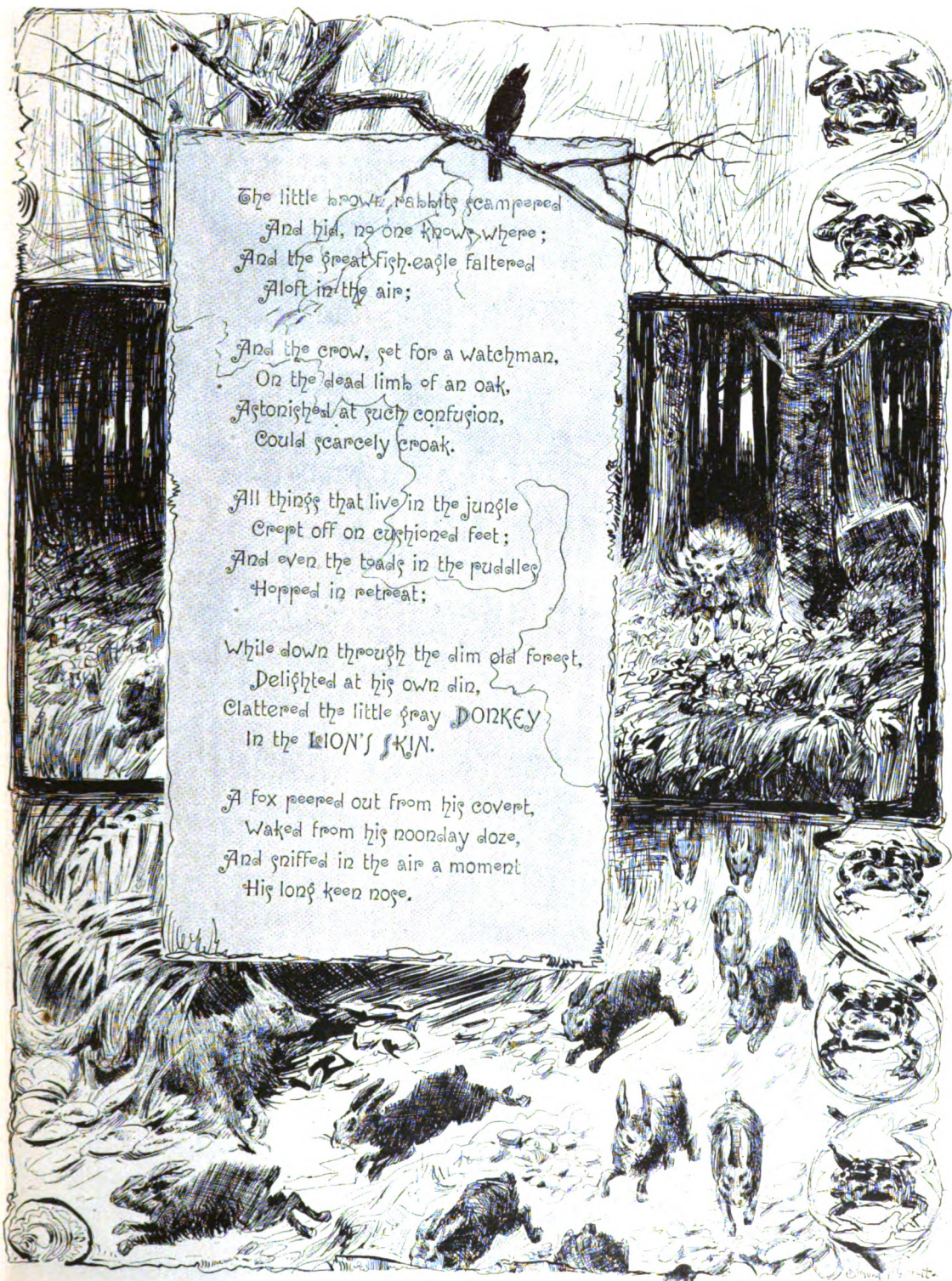
The little brown rabbits scampered  
And hid, no one knows where;  
And the great fish-eagle faltered  
Aloft in the air;

And the crow, set for a watchman,  
On the dead limb of an oak,  
Astonished at such confusion,  
Could scarcely croak.

All things that live in the jungle  
Crept off on cushioned feet;  
And even the toads in the puddles  
Hopped in retreat;

While down through the dim old forest,  
Delighted at his own din,  
Clattered the little gray DONKEY  
In the LION'S SKIN.

A fox peered out from his covert,  
Waked from his noonday doze,  
And sniffed in the air a moment  
His long keen nose.





He heard the hoofs and the whinny;  
He saw the scared things flee;  
And out he stepped on the pathway,  
Grave as could be,

And sat there, placidly waiting;  
"Ahem," he said, "good day!  
How long since the KING OF THE FOREST  
learned how to bray?"

The DONKEY halted, and, shaking  
His yellow mane about,  
To awe the fox with his grandeur  
Neighed shrilly out.

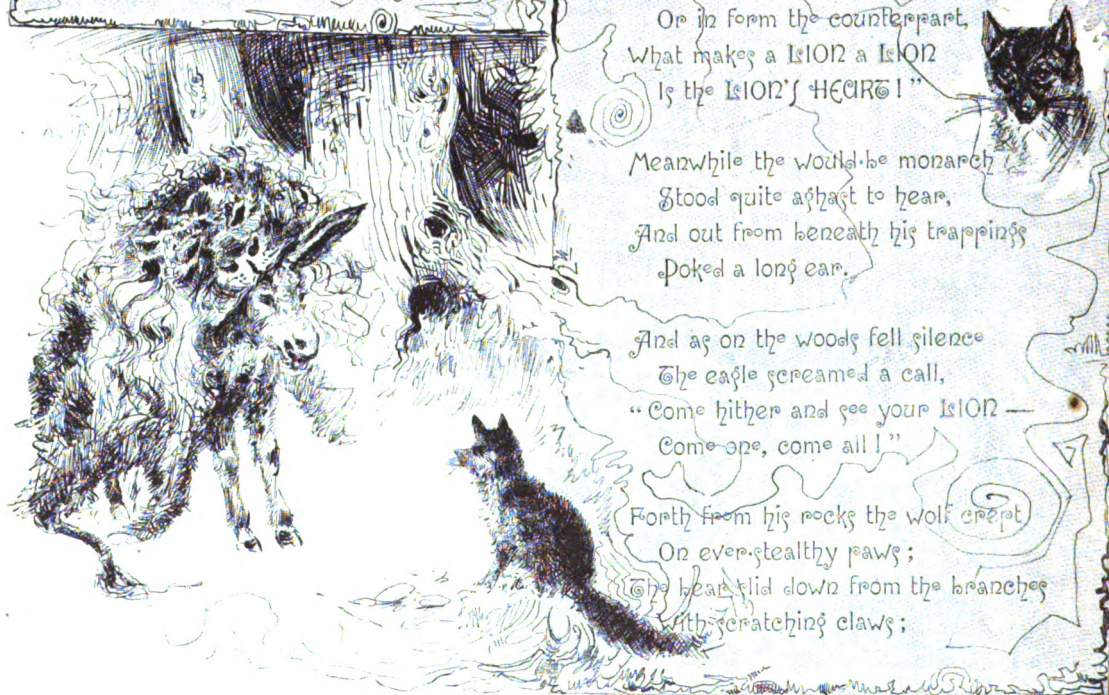
But the fox, unmoved, smiled grimly.  
"Poor simpleton," he cried,  
"There's more to a real live LION  
than a LION'S HAIR!"

"No matter how close in color  
Or in form the counterpart,  
What makes a LION a LION  
Is the LION'S HEART!"

Meanwhile the would-be monarch  
Stood quite aghast to hear,  
And out from beneath his trapings  
Poked a long ear.

And as on the woods fell silence  
The eagle screamed a call,  
"Come hither and see your LION —  
Come one, come all!"

Forth from his rocks the wolf crept  
On ever-stealthy paws;  
The bear slid down from the branches  
With scratching claws;







They scoffed at his heels; they clamored  
About his ears, and said  
That they were so huge and hairy  
They hid his head.

And his voice — did he call that singing?  
And what might the sweet tune be?  
They thought it would do for a fog-horn  
Far out at sea!

The poor little, gray little **DONKEY**  
Shivered in every limb,  
Till his royal yellow mantle  
Fell off from him.

Then, drooping and quite dejected,  
He turned with a gentle trot  
Toward his own familiar pasture —  
The thistle-plot.

The mother-bear dragged her baby  
To be the first to see;  
There were crows and coons and squirrels  
In every tree;

The frogs swarmed out of the puddles;  
Hares leaped there by the score;  
And such a look of derision  
As each one wore!

Ah, this was the **HERO**, was it?  
They blushed, you may suppose,  
To think they had been so frightened  
By merely **GOATS**!

The garment was grand and ample,  
But the creature base and small;  
He had duped them just one moment,  
But that was all.

And the fox said, "Only with cowards  
Does shallow pretence win!  
No **DONKEY** is made a **LION**  
By a **LION'S** SKIN!"



Edmund H. Garrett





The Maid.

&



The Milkpail.

·Versified· from *A. Popple* by *Mrs. Clara Doty Bates.*



DOWN the lane to the meadow bars  
Went tripping a country LASS,  
She could hear the cow-bells tinkle, tinkle,  
While they cropped the grass;  
She carried her bonnet on her arm  
And a pail to hold the milk,  
And her eyes were as blue as periwinkle,  
Her hair like yellow silk,  
And she called, "Co', boss! co', boss!"

The cow with the crumpled horn lowed back:  
The little red heifer moo-ed;  
Old Brindle, glad to see her coming,  
Went close to the bars and stood;  
And soon in the bright tin pail the milk  
Streamed warm and sweet and white,  
Till it was full to the top and foaming;  
And when the flies would bite,  
The maid said, "So — so, boss!"



The milking done, the brimming pail  
She placed upon her head  
With strong young arms, and from the meadow  
Passed with a lightsome tread.  
The sun was sinking in the west  
Red as a sun could be;  
And longer and cooler grew the shadow  
Of every bough and tree,  
And she hummed, "Tra-la! tra-la!"

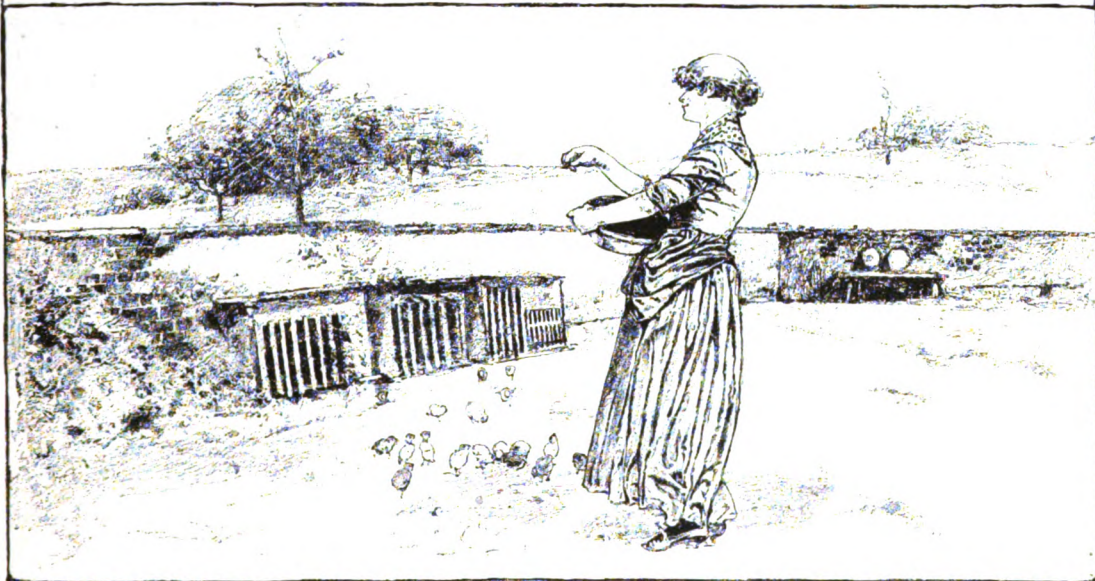
What could the LASS be thinking of,  
Sauntering so slowly there?  
Not of the film-winged midges gleaming  
Through the soft, purple air;  
Not of the cow with the crumpled horn,  
Nor the jangle of her bell;  
Ah, none of these, for she was dreaming  
Of how the milk would sell,  
As she hummed, "Tra-la! tra-la!"





"This milk will buy three hundred eggs,"  
 She planned, "or thereabout;  
 And the speckled hen is very thrifty,  
 And she will hatch them out;  
 Allow for broken ones, bad luck,  
 And loss, when all is told,  
 Two hundred, I am sure, and fifty  
 Young chickens can be sold!"  
 And she smiled to think of it.

"But first I'll feed them meal and corn,  
 And their coops, all in a row,  
 I'll keep straw-strewn and clean and sunny,  
 And then how fat they'll grow!  
 They'll fetch the very highest price  
 When they are brought to town,  
 And with my portion of the money  
 I'll buy myself a gown —  
 A shining silken gown!"



"Three gathered ruffles round the skirt  
 I'll have, with a puff between;  
 A full round waist with bows upon it,  
 And the color shall be green;  
 I'll buy long primrose elbow gloves,  
 And a little scarlet shawl,  
 And I'll have a feather in my bonnet,  
 And a shrimp-pink parasol!"  
 And she merrily laughed, "Ha! hà!"



"And when I go to the village church,  
 Or to the fair-week dance,  
 And the lads come round me all devotion,  
 I will not deign a glance.  
 This one will bow, that one will smile  
 And whisper some sweet word,  
 But I'll toss my head with a scornful motion,  
 As if I had not heard —  
 Like this — heigh-up! heigh-ho!"



And she tossed her foolish, playful head  
 With the hair like yellow silk,  
 And down the frothing milk-pail tumbled  
 And spilt the precious milk.  
 Where now were the sea-green gown, the gloves,  
 And the shrimp-pink parasol?  
 She gazed at the ground, dismayed and troubled,  
 And tears began to fall,  
 And she sighed, "Alas! alas!"

She reached the kitchen; on a shelf  
 Were ranged the burnished pans;  
 The kittens ran to meet her mewling,  
 For supper from her hands;  
 She felt her mother, waiting, tired,  
 Would blame her and bewail,  
 And ask what could she have been doing  
 To overturn that pail,  
 And spill the milk — oh dear!



All for a dream, a silly dream,  
 A castle in the air,  
 A little breath-blown rainbow bubble  
 For which she did not care!  
 Dear were her mother's peace and thrift,  
 And painful were her frowns,  
 Nor would she have brought her fret or trouble  
 For half a score of gowns —  
 Nay, nay, not for a score!

So to herself this Lass, whose heart  
 Was really sweet and sound,  
 Reflected that in fancied pleasures  
 Is little comfort found,  
 And though one's lot be always tame,  
 Nor ever fine or gay,  
 Happy is she who seeks her treasures  
 In real things every day!  
 — Grown wise had the little MAID!



# THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER

VERSIFIED  
FROM  
ÆSOP'S FABLES

BY  
MRS. CLARA  
DOTY  
BATES

OUT from their huts and houses,  
In frocks and smocks and blouses  
Of dingy country brown,  
Each day the ANTS came swarming  
To go about their farming,  
Even though the sun poured down  
A perfect blaze of scorching rays,  
And hot enough to melt them;  
They knew too well how winter days  
Would pierce and chill and pelt them.

Some plowed long even furrows;  
With little red wheelbarrows  
Some trundled here and there,  
And if a heedless brother  
Ran bumping 'gainst another,  
Why, no one seemed to care—  
Small fear of fisticuffs or fight  
With no one to begin it;  
Yet if they met a worm—poor wight—  
They slew him in a minute.

With whistle and with singing,  
Mowers their scythes went swinging,  
And swath on swath laid low;  
With waists so very dwindling,  
And arms so lean and spindling,  
They looked too slim to mow,  
Yet still all day, as if 'twere play,  
From every clover thicket  
The whet of blades came, faintly gay,  
Like the echo of a cricket.





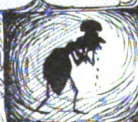
In time the grain grew yellow,  
The apples sweet and mellow;  
The grasses saved for seed  
Were ready with click and patter  
Their small black fruit to scatter;  
And even the lowly weed,  
Camped like a gipsy in the field,  
Or by the wayside creeping,  
Was waiting the fit hour to yield  
Its harvest to their keeping.

Forever stirring and trudging,  
They kept on plodding, drudging,  
As the summer hours winged by;  
They had no frolic, no leisure,  
Took never a day of pleasure,  
Not even the Fourth of July;  
Why, even the King, when he went to bed  
To rest him for the morrow,  
Dreamed that the Queen mixed cake and bread  
In his little red wheelbarrow.

Then, with a world of trouble,  
They hacked the tall wheat stubble  
Until their elbows ached;  
Hacked, hewed and hugged and hustled,  
Till down the gold ears rustled,  
While others gleaned and raked.  
Wide open swung the granary doors,  
With flails the air resounded,  
As on the dusty, straw-strewn floors  
Whack! whack! the threshers pounded.

Meanwhile, within the houses,  
The wives of the ANTS in blouses  
Found work enough to do,  
The whirring spindles turning,  
Baking, scouring and churning,  
And rocking the cradle too;  
While boys and girls with rosy looks  
The path to school went tripping,  
Some to get knowledge out of books,  
And some, perhaps, a whipping.

Near by there lived a dapper,  
Long-legged, gray GRASSHOPPER,  
And a bachelor he was;  
Not famous for his riches,  
Yet he wore green silk knee-breeches  
And a claw-hammer coat of gauze.  
As to stocks and bonds and houses and lands,  
Of course he hadn't any,  
But was very careful of his white hands,  
And his fine, well-waxed antennæ.







Though always without money,  
 He managed to dine on honey  
 As choice as the choicest eat:  
 And he'd drink a cool dew toddy  
 With almost anybody,  
 If it were only sweet.  
 And then, perched on a plantain leaf,  
 With his eye-glass to his eye,  
 He'd flutter his pocket-handkerchief  
 At the first girl-butterfly.



When down the rain came splashing,  
 And spattering and dashing,  
 And all the leaves were wet,  
 He'd sigh: "Of course for the present  
 This isn't really pleasant,  
 But 'twill never do to fret!"  
 And then a mushroom for a tent,  
 Or a hay-rick for a cover,  
 He'd find, and call it excellent,  
 Until the shower was over.



Great was his pleasure, very,  
 To laugh at and make merry  
 Over the busy ANTS;  
 Only to see them moiling,  
 Their striving so and toiling,  
 Provoked his heels to dance.  
 "I'll never work," he cried, "like these,  
 Until the weather's colder!"  
 And he thought them vulgar as common bees  
 With bags slung on each shoulder.



Jack Frost came creeping, stealing,  
 Cold-hearted and unfeeling,  
 Icicles in his breath;  
 Then, "Oh, for a fur-lined wrapper,"  
 Bemoaning cried GRASSHOPPER,  
 "Or I shall freeze to death!"  
 Then he found he'd nothing on which to dine,  
 And nothing to drink whatever,  
 And the length of his spine he could define  
 By a constant ague shiver.







His muscles were full of twinges,  
His joints like rusty hinges;  
"Ugh! I know what it is!"  
He groaned, as a sharp crick wrung him,  
And pains like needles stung him,  
"'Tis the farmers' rheumatiz!"  
And he wondered if they kept always warm  
In butternut-colored blouses,  
And said, "'Twill do no special harm  
To visit them in their houses!"

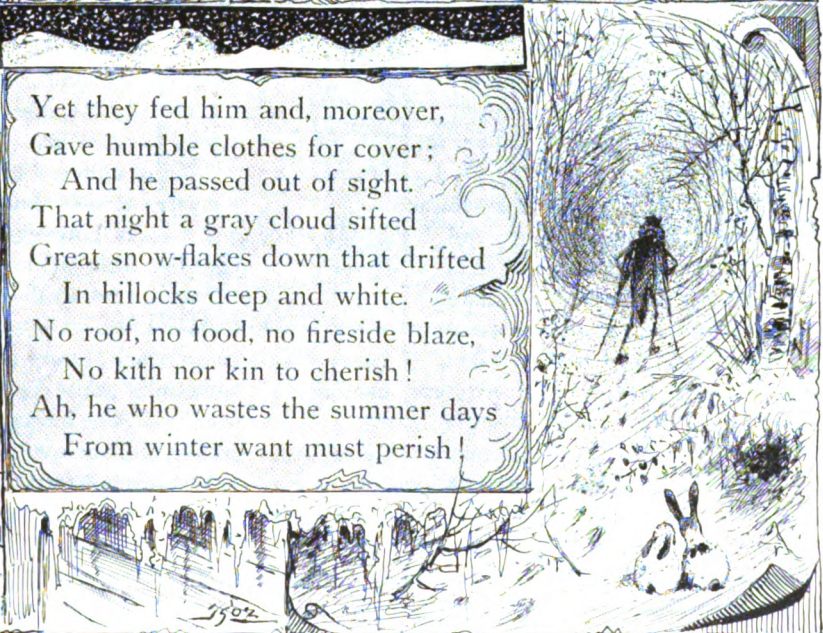


So he hobbled away on crutches,  
In his faded silk knee-breeches  
And his gauze claw-hammer coat,  
But not, as formerly, laughing —  
He was wheezing, sneezing, coughing,  
With a flannel round his throat.  
The ANTS upon their granary floor  
Were spreading wheat for drying,  
And out from an open kitchen door  
Came a whiff of doughnuts frying.

"I've met reverses lately,"  
He stammered, bowing stately;  
"Pray lend me half a dime,  
I haven't a crumb for supper," —  
And he blushed, poor old GRASSHOPPER —  
"I'll pay — some other time."  
What did you do the summer through?"  
Questioned a gruff old farmer.  
"I danced." "Well, keep on dancing, do;  
'Twill help to keep you warmer!"



Yet they fed him and, moreover,  
Gave humble clothes for cover;  
And he passed out of sight.  
That night a gray cloud sifted  
Great snow-flakes down that drifted  
In hillocks deep and white.  
No roof, no food, no fireside blaze,  
No kith nor kin to cherish!  
Ah, he who wastes the summer days  
From winter want must perish!





# THE TOWN and COUNTRY MOUSE

ONCE on a time there were two MICE,  
And one lived in the town;  
She frizzed her hair about her forehead,  
And wore a flowered gown,  
Her finger nails were pink and polished,  
And tastefully were placed  
A black-heart sunflower on her shoulder,  
And a hollyhock at her waist.



At peep of dawn, one day in summer,  
She opened her eyes to see  
Whether it rained or whether it shone,  
Or what the weather might be;  
For the city heats were fierce and trying,  
And she had planned to spend,  
If it were fair, a day in the country  
With the other MOUSE, her FRIEND.

There was no cloud in all the heavens,  
Nor mist, nor fleck, nor stain,  
Nor any possible fear of shower  
Unless blue sky could rain.  
So with reticule of Russia leather  
And a white lace parasol,  
She left her room in the kitchen cupboard  
And scampered along the hall.



Versified from  
Æsop's Fables  
by Mrs. Clapnet Bates

Decorated  
By - Charles H. Mason

Out on the coolly-sprinkled pavement  
Pattered her bits of feet;  
But one lone cart awoke the echoes  
Upon the slumbering street  
As on she sped, with whisk and rustle,  
Timid, and yet elate,  
With ever an eye for a cat on the railing,  
Or a dog at the wayside gate.



She reached the country; the road was dusty,  
The may-weeds bitter and white,  
Yet under their shade her way she made  
Safely and out of sight.  
On either side were fields of barley,  
Of wheat and oats and rye,  
And they nodded their bearded heads together  
And whispered as she passed by.



She reached the house of her FRIEND, and found it  
Ah, what sort of a house,  
That she should come so far to visit it,  
She, a high-bred MOUSE?  
Only a shanty of leaves and grasses  
Thatched with a roof of straw;  
And though there were beams and shelves and  
crannies,  
No bric-a-brac she saw.

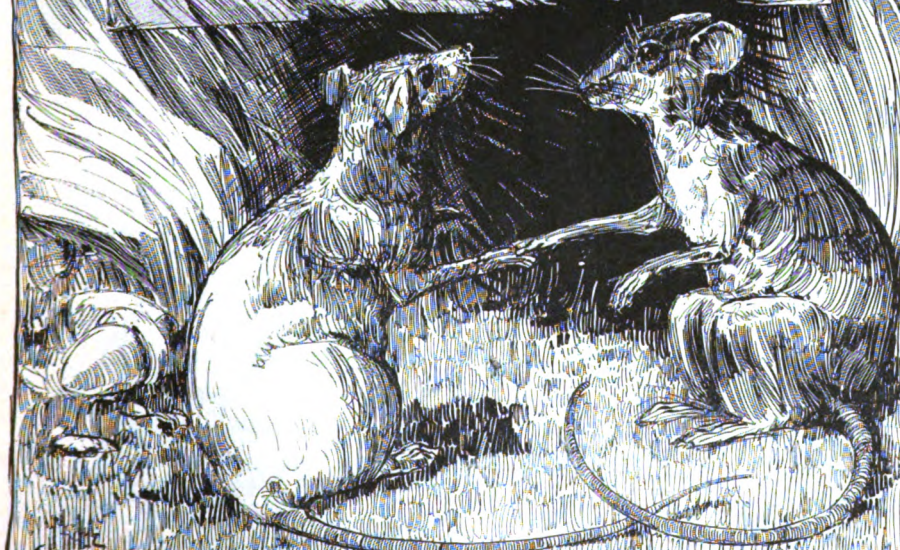




A bed of thistle-silk, with a pillow  
Of dandelion-down,  
Was there, 'tis true, and as fine as the finest  
She ever had seen in town;  
And her FRIEND was very glad to greet her  
Indeed, although she wore  
Such funny clothes, and of such a fashion  
As never was seen before:

A long checked apron, a huge sun-bonnet,  
A pair of leather shoes,  
And a dress whose waist and sleeves and collar  
Seemed a mile too loose.  
And though in the meadow the spotted lilies  
Grew tall above the grass,  
And the wild sunflowers along the fences  
Shone as yellow as brass,

And in the marshes and low wet places  
The cardinal-flowers burned red,  
As if some wild wood thing were wounded  
And here its blood was shed —  
Yet the little RUSTIC, content and simple,  
Had never thought to wear  
A flaming blossom, a corn-silk tassel,  
Or a cockle in her hair!





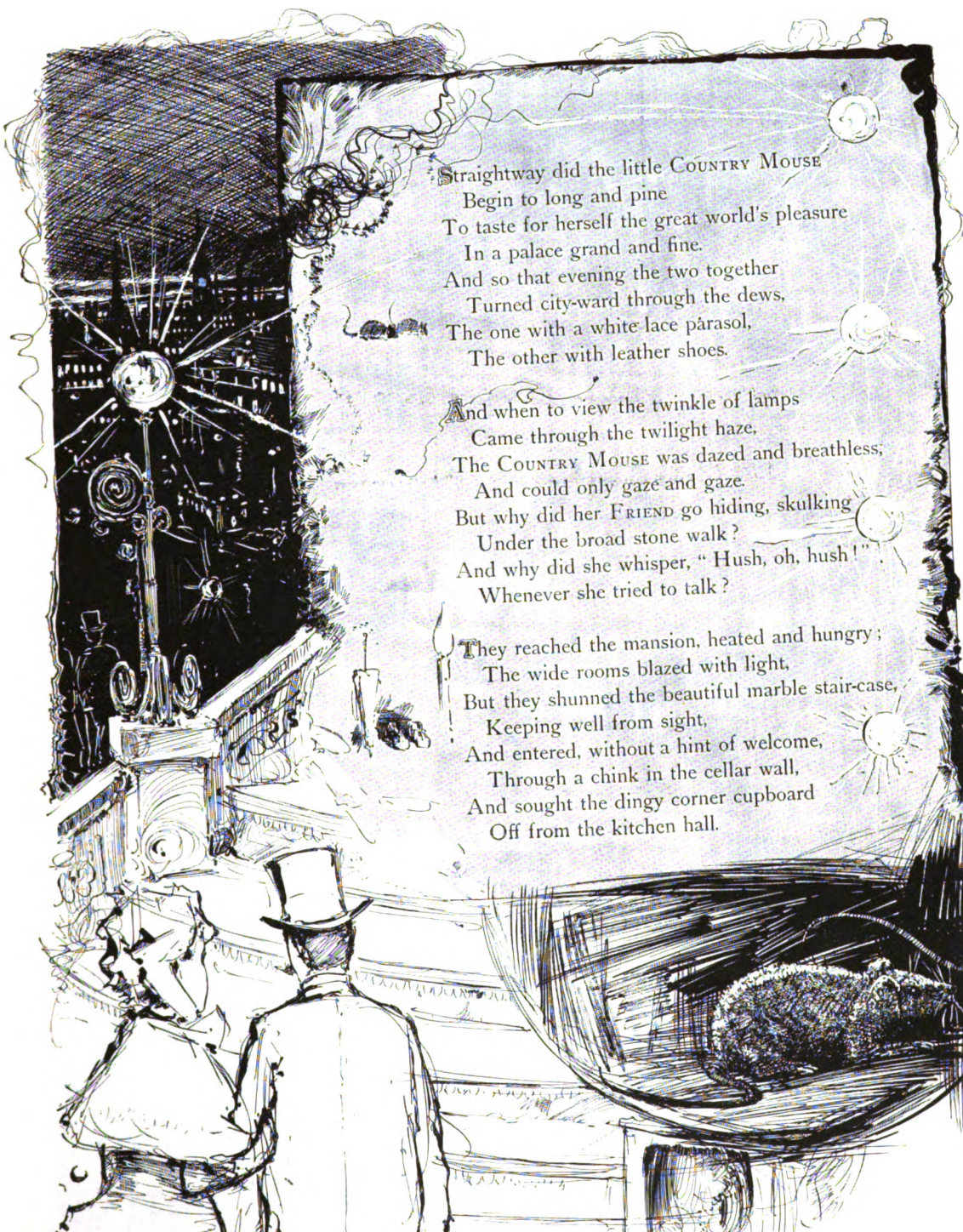
Humble she was, nor vain in the least,  
But open of heart and hand,  
And she welcomed her FRIEND and spread her  
table.

With the best in all the land:  
Corn in the milk, ripe wheat, and oats  
In sheaths of silver green,  
With sour sorrel and clover-tops  
Tucked temptingly between;

Barley with beards that tickled their noses  
And made them squeak and laugh,  
While the dew they drank from acorn saucers  
Was better than wine by half;  
And while they nibbled and munched and chattered,  
They had no haunting fear  
That there might be poison upon the bread,  
Or a prowling pussy near.

A dinner of herbs, with freedom sweetened,  
What reason to complain?  
Yet the MOUSE FROM TOWN had lofty fancies  
And thought the fare was plain.  
"You live but the life of ants," she cried,  
"Ah, if you'll come with me,  
You shall see the way we dine at home.  
Our ease, our luxury."





Straightway did the little COUNTRY MOUSE  
Begin to long and pine  
To taste for herself the great world's pleasure  
In a palace grand and fine.  
And so that evening the two together  
Turned city-ward through the dews,  
The one with a white lace parasol,  
The other with leather shoes.

And when to view the twinkle of lamps  
Came through the twilight haze,  
The COUNTRY MOUSE was dazed and breathless;  
And could only gaze and gaze.  
But why did her FRIEND go hiding, skulking  
Under the broad stone walk?  
And why did she whisper, "Hush, oh, hush!"  
Whenever she tried to talk?

They reached the mansion, heated and hungry;  
The wide rooms blazed with light,  
But they shunned the beautiful marble stair-case,  
Keeping well from sight,  
And entered, without a hint of welcome,  
Through a chink in the cellar wall,  
And sought the dingy corner cupboard  
Off from the kitchen hall.



"No doubt, dear friend, you're nearly famished.  
But we have supper late.  
Besides, there are guests — I hear the music —  
And we shall have to wait,"  
Said the hostess to her country cousin,  
Who, glad of so fine a chance,  
Cried out, "I am not so very tired,  
Suppose we join the dance!"



The Town Mouse shrieked in actual horror  
At anything so rash:

"They would hunt us down with cane and poke  
And kill us in a flash!

And think of the cat and her four kittens!

And the savage terrier too! —

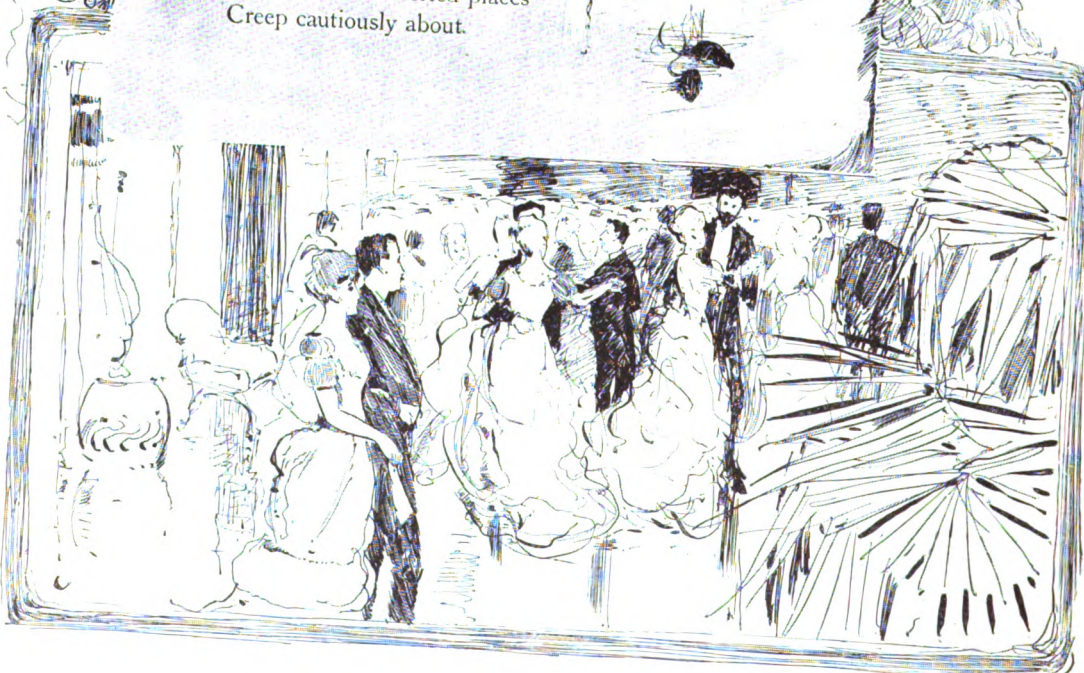
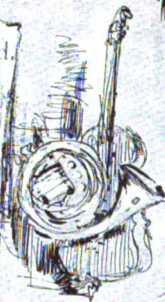
The only way we can get our supper  
Is after the rest are through."

Their watch began, their bright eyes peeping  
Out from the veriest chink,

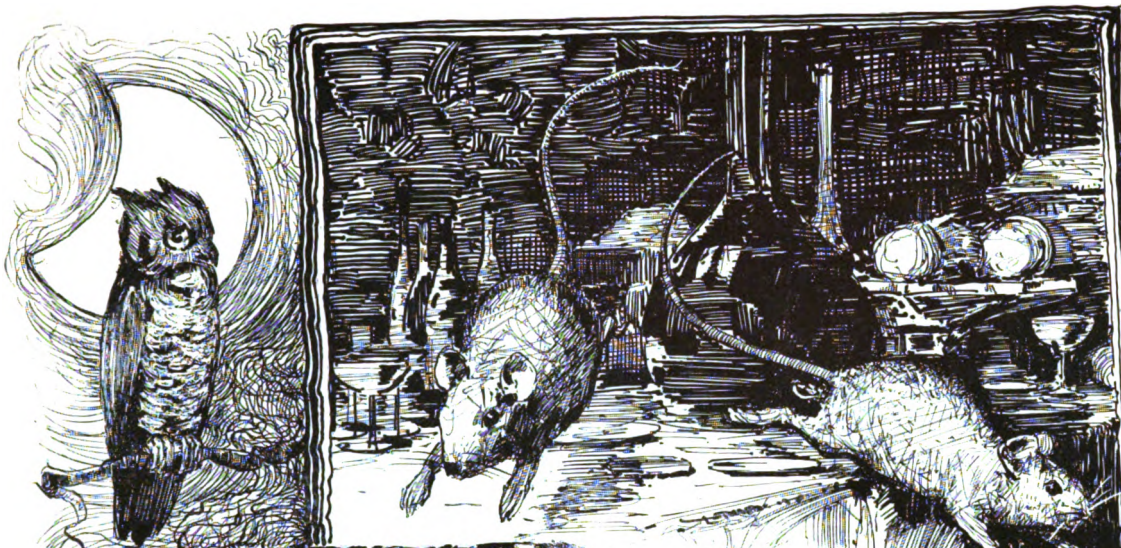
Parching with thirst and faint with hunger,  
Nor able to sleep a wink;

Indeed, the room grew gray with morning  
Before they dared crawl out,

And in the now deserted places  
Creep cautiously about.







To find the still half-laden tables  
 Was an easy matter quite,  
 By the glitter of glass, the sheen of silver,  
 And the glimmer of linen white;  
 But before they tasted the tiniest morsel  
 They heard the creak of a door,  
 And with limbs a-tremble and hearts a-patter  
 Fled back to their crack once more.

Again and again they made a sally,  
 Tried stealth and stratagem,  
 But ever in some unlooked-for manner  
 New danger threatened them:  
 Till the COUNTRY MOUSE, exhausted, starving,  
 Cried out in sheer despair,  
 "No doubt, if we could only reach it,  
 A bountiful feast is there!"

"But better I like my quiet hedge-rows,  
 My roots and leaves and grains,  
 For peace is there; while in your mansion  
 Nothing but terror reigns!"  
 So sadly she said adieu, and slowly  
 Back to the country went,  
 To her house of weeds and her awkward fashions,  
 Cured of her discontent.

